

Shingles

After a person has chickenpox, the virus that causes it can remain inactive in the body for many years. Shingles occurs when the viruses becomes active again, usually in older adults. When women get chickenpox while pregnant, their babies sometimes develop shingles during infancy. Also, if children get chickenpox before the age of one, they may develop shingles during childhood. Shingles is a milder illness in children than in adults; but it can be a serious illness in anyone with a weakened immune system.

CAUSE: Varicella-zoster virus, a member of the herpesvirus family.

SYMPTOMS: Severe pain and numbness along certain nerve pathways, commonly around the midline (trunk) or on the face. 10 to 14 days later, clusters of blisters appear in crops, usually on one side of the body and sloers together than in chickenpox.

TRANSMISSION: Shingles is not transmitted from one person to another. However, when people who have not had chickenpox are exposed to the fluid from shingles, they can develop chickenpox.

INCUBATION: Unknown cause on why the once inactive virus becomes active in the body.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: Until one week after the blisters appear.



EXCLUSION

If sores can be covered by clothing or a bandage, no exclusion is needed. If they cannot be covered, the infected individual should be excluded until the sores crust and dry.

Prevention & Control

1. When a pregnant woman or a person with a weak immune system, who has NOT had chickenpox, is exposed to shingles, he or she should contact a physician for possible treatment usually within 6 days.



DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN TO A CHILD WITH CHICKENPOX.

There is a risk of developing Reye syndrome (a serious condition which can cause death) when children or adolescents take aspirin for viral illnesses such as chickenpox or influenza.

For more information, you or your physician may call the Central District Health Department at 385-5175, or your local health department.